Hi Ned and Tim: attached is Ch.5. after my modifications. Ready for Ned. In few days I will send separately the first few pages, corrected especially in re to Nili, by me. Everything else is there for "final" processing by Ned.
Best
EB
~~**CHAPTER ONE**~~

Chapter Five (2)

Chapter Five

[EB. (a)Till p. 3 some small changes does not appear in red. (b) Nili's piece is not yet done. I should sdd the real fascination with 1st real love which I had at 20, Nava (later I dated at 26 that's a totally different person. To be completed]

Deciding to go to university was one thing. Getting there was another. To the army, I may have been a decorated soldier. To the universities, I was just a kid in his early twenties who hadn't even graduated from high school.

That was the first thing I set out to remedy. When I agreed with Dovik that I would stay on well into 1965, it was with the understanding that I'd be spending some of

that time making up academic ground. I still led several cross-border operations. I remained fully invested, and involved, in my role as deputy commander. But once or twice a week, I would skip a nighttime training exercise and bury myself in books in my corner of our room. I prepared for my *bagrut*, the high-school matriculation exam, by correspondence course. Often until two or three in the morning, I sat studying literature, ***history, Bible Hebrew grammar and Math***,: the whole complement of areas where I would be tested. I spent a bit of time on math too (lowest level choice, to save time and energy) , though I was fairly confident I could clear this hurdle pretty easily. I did. I passed the exam as whole as well. But not exactly with flying colors. If I was going to make it to university, and certainly if I was going to thrive there, I'd clearly have to do better.

I took that as a challenge, and threw myself into meeting it. I decided the easiest way to test whether I had the qualities to succeed was to measure myself against those who quite obviously did. For advice, I asked the people who seemed most likely to know where these mathematics and science standouts went to study: the young officers in the technological unit with whom I'd worked closely on the Sinai operation. They all said

the same thing. The toughest, and most sought-after, course was the electrical engineering program at the Technion. It was the place where Ya’akov Tubul was now studying. It accepted 75 new students each year, from the roughly 1,500 who applied.

There were several privately run classes around Israel geared to preparing students for the Technion concourse exam, and I joined one in the center of Tel Aviv. The focus was on subjects where I was basically comfortable: math and physics. But the *level* was far higher than anything I’d done. Three, sometimes four, times a week, I went into town for classes. Then, I’d stay up well past midnight working through what I’d learned. Finally, I took the test. Weeks went by without my getting the letter saying how I’d done. As I recall, we had been told at the exam that everyone would hear back by the end of May. By the 28th, I *still* hadn’t heard. I already assumed I had not been accepted and started to adapt. by the time the letter did arrive, I almost felt like not opening it. But I did. And I’d been accepted.

At first, I was elated, not just about getting into the course, but because it had validated for me the sense that I could hold my own with applicants who had taken a considerably less eccentric route to High

education/Technion. Yet as I imagined myself as a student at the Technion, doubts began to creep in. Academically, I felt equal to the task. Measuring *that* was what the entrance exam had been for. I had no qualms about the quality of the education I'd get there. It was the oldest university in Israel, founded some 35 years before the state, and it had a reputation for excellence that was now growing internationally as well. But one reason for its reputation was that the Technion's primary, almost laser-like, focus was on two particular applications of math and science: engineering and technology. I was more interested in the pure science.

I had another, more mundane, reason for my second thoughts. The Technion was located in the northern port city of Haifa, well away from the social and cultural heart of the country. I feared being cocooned within a *community* of scientific engineers, in an environment that seemed to offer less of a taste of learning, of *life*, outside those boundaries. No/(only little of) music or theater. Nights out with friends. Or nights out with *girls*.

Sayeret Matkal had not proven much better on that last front. Still, I had begun seeing a girl whose only failing, in my eyes, was that she seemed less mesmerized

by me than I was by her. Her name was Nili SonkinPriell. I had first met her a couple of years earlier, by accident. I Just ended Officer's School and was on one of my first trips to the Head Quarter. for some administration process whjch Ij cannot even recall the reason for my visit. I entered to the small building, originally residential, part of the Templers (German) order colony, Sarrona,

[probably to be erased, or shortened. EB "–containing the administrative offices of the intelligence corps, near Viktor's Gate ouf the compound (–named aftered the legendary Ssargent Ggeneral of the site), at the *kirya*, army/IDF headquarters in Tel Aviv".EB].

I entered the building and turned into the first room to the left to ask where is the office I needed. In front of me behind a desk, there she sat. Gorgeous looking, dark hair, big mesmerizing/penetrating green eyes, a hint of smile on her beautifuly shaped lips. I couldn't remove my sights from her and tried to ask, as calmly as I could, where is the office I had to visit. She answered with the soft, rich, almost seductive/sexy voice she had. Nili was doing her military service there. She was ebullient, and funny, not to mention gorgeous looking, with the most beautiful smile. I soon began manufacturing/producing

reasons to go the intelligence offices just to see her and say hello.

In competing for her attention, much less her affection, I soon realized what I, as a mere kibbutz boy, was up against. I noticed an impressive green car parked just outside her office window. It was a Jaguar, which a Hope-Diamond-like rarity in Israel at the time. And it belonged, I discovered, to a mere private, whose job was to raise and lower the gate outside headquarters. Even more discouraging, the normal avenues of courtship were closed to me. I had at least grown in physical stature – more than four inches, to about five-foot-eight – in the years since boot camp. I was shaving now and, as if to advertise the point, had cultivated a neat little mustache. And within The Unit~~the military~~, ~~–~~I did have some stature.

I was an ~~an~~ officer, if only a second lieutenant. I was part of an extraordinary military unit, which had not yet been~~actually begun~~ doing anything extraordinary~~–things~~.

~~But Sayeret Matkal was a unit whose very existence remained an official secret. I could hardly puff out my chest and recount, with appropriate modesty, our recent exploits in the field. Our operations were known to so~~

~~few people that even the military decorations we had received were presented to us behind closed doors.~~

By some miracle, Nili did take a liking to me. We began occasionally going out together, for a walk in the streets~~meal~~ or a theatre or a movie, or just sitting talking. Along with her obvious other attractions, I also found her to have a serious side as well~~l~~: I loved to listen to her and she was the only girl I felt natural and genuine with, however difficult it was for me to express it. NILI had a quiet self-confidence, a sense of purpose and value, probably a ~~and an expectation that if she set herself a~~ goal ~~, she'd be equal to it~~. I was slightly – no, *more* than slightly - ~~slightly –~~ starstruck. The night before I left, in May 1963, to join the French commandos in Mont Louis, she ~~had even~~ invited me over to meet her parents. But by 1965, Nili had finished her army service. She inevitably had other friends, other interests. I also got the clear impression that her parents – a solid Tel Aviv family – felt that this swarthy kibbutznik doing mysterious things across Israel's borders – was not quite the catch they imagined for their daughter. So while Nili and I did continue to see each other off and on, I began to sense that the prospect of something more permanent was slipping away.

Still, with both social and academic considerations in mind, I did finally write to the Technion and tell them that, while I was grateful to have been accepted, I'd decided to go to study math and physics at Hebrew University, in Jerusalem. Though the course of study there was reputed to be even~~nry~~ wider and deeper and needed more abstract thinking~~bit as~~ rigor~~ous~~ than~~as~~ the Technion's, there was no formal entrance exam. Instead, a kind of academic Darwinism applied. Only about a third of the students who began the program managed to graduate. I still remember ~~o~~the opening briefing by the~~ne of our~~ Math Proffesor who was responsible for the new cohort,~~professors~~ standing before us on the first day of the course, in September 1965. In a phrase that would, a few years later, become associated with Harvard Law School, he told us: "Look at the person seated on your left. Now, look to your right. Only one of you will make it through successfully even to 2nd year."

My move to university was the most dramatic change in my life since entering the sayeret five years earlier. My parents, though proud of my accomplishments in the army, were, at least initially, very pleased. In my father's case, the enthusiasm had nothing to do with sharing my geopolitical judgement. He was not convinced, as I

recall, that Israel had already fought its last major wars, in 48′ and 56′ and was now on –the road to "normalcy" and probably peace. But from the moment I had warded off his entreaties and left the regional high school, he was convinced I was wasting – *betraying* was the word he used – my intellectual gifts, especially my talent for mathematics and science. When I got my acceptance from the Technion, he was especially happy. He, himself, had done courses there in practical electronics after being put in charge of the electrical infrastructure on the kibbutz. Even when I decided on Hebrew University, he remained enthusiastic. He, after all, had got his degree there after arriving in Palestine.

My mother was more conflicted. She, too, was all for my going to university. It was the *way* in which I chose to do so that was difficult for her, since it involved a formal break with the kibbutz. I had made the same break with the military. From now on, I'd be a reserve officer: a *promoted* reserve officer, a captain, but with no formal tie to the army. I could have gone to university without taking that step. The army would actually have paid my way. But this would have required me to commit to six further years in uniform. The rule was two years for each

year of study. Now I faced an identical choice with Mishmar Hasharon. Like other kibbutzim, it paid for its young members to go to university, but on the condition that they would return and work on the kibbutz for a set number of years afterward. If I had balked at doing that, despite the real bond, the real *love* almost, I felt for the sayeret, I couldn't see making the same agreement with the kibbutz. I did feel a deep sense of belonging with Mishmar Hasharon. It was home. It would always remain my home. But at least from my experience, I sensed it was an environment which was wonderful for a child, until the age of sixteen or so, and for retirement, from the age of 66. For the five decades in between, especially if you were self-motivated and enjoyed individual challenges and independent activity, it was more limiting.

* * *

I did not study on the same campus as my father did. The original Hebrew University site, atop Mount Scopus on the eastern edge of Jerusalem, had ended up in Jordanian hands in 1948, along with the Old City, with Judaism's holiest sites, the surviving Western Wall of the ancient

temple. The city had been divided ever since. Israel controlled the western half, and Hebrew University had been relocated to the neighborhood of Givat Ram. The new campus was a mile or so from the main road up from Tel Aviv, a few hundred yards from where the new marble home of the Israel's parliament, the Knesset, was nearing completion.

I had actually seen the *old* campus while still in the sayeret, a few months before I left. We were planning a bugging operation near the West Bank airport in Qalandia, the same place for which I'd designed my mock raid at officers' school. There was no way you could see the area from our side of Jerusalem. But you could from Mount Scopus, which, under the terms of the armistice agreement ending the 1948 war, was part of "no man's land" – with guarantees for a group of about 100 Israelis who stayed on to looked after the university and the nearby buildings of the former Hadassah Hospital.

Twice a month, Israel could send a resupply convoy, overseen by a UN representative and a couple of our policemen. Soldiers weren't allowed to go. So for my reconnaissance visit, I borrowed a police uniform. The convoys always set out in the morning, returning shortly before nightfall, so once I had got a thorough look at

the terrain stretching north towards Qalandia, I had a few hours on my hands. I walked around the area. I'm not sure why, but I left the university buildings until last. Even given my father's link to the place, I was unprepared for how moved I was by entering inside. I tried to imagine how it would have been for him to study there: a double orphan in infancy, just starting a new life, alone except for his brother, but also wholly immersed, I'm sure, in the educational richness around him. I went from classroom to classroom, all empty, until, feeling a shudder as I walked in, I reached the old biology lab. In my father's time, there had been no real science teaching. The lab must have been opened a few years later. The scene was like one of Goya's dark paintings, only even darker for the total absence of human life. Cobwebs hung like a veneer of doom, and on long wooden shelves there were still many open booknotes handwritten by students of the time, chalk drawings and texts on the blackboards,as well as dozens of lab jars, where,~~s.~~ Preserved in formaldehyde was an array of specimens, including, at the very end of one shelf, a collection of human fetuses. For weeks afterwards, the image haunted me.

Arriving at Hebrew University, on its Givat Ram new campus, about six months later, I found the academic and intellectual experience to be everything I'd hoped. Yet my life there soon turned out to be different – (dramatically different?) – than I had expected.

The main reason was that, for weeks and, at one point, months at a time, I simply wasn't there. Like any reservist, I knew I was liable to be called up for a month each year. For most soldiers-turned-students, this was not too difficult to manage. Reserve duty could be done during the summer, or at other times when classes weren't in session. But as a member of a specially trained, and small, unit like Sayeret Matkal, the call-ups were always going be less flexible. In my case, with my experience of having participated in nearly all of the unit's early operations, I also suspected I might be called on when similar missions, on terrain that I knew well, were planned. And that is what happened. Barely had I begun to settle in as a student when, in the final weeks of 1965 and the first couple of months of 1966, I was called to participate in our latest T-junction operation in the Sinai.

The same thing happened the following winter, though this time I was away for something like two ~~four~~ months.

For a~~two~~ mission~~s~~.[Ned I, misled you. This Yadgarov operation took place in Jan 65. I was brought from my Math/Physics prep. Course for the Tech..EB] The first (Yadgarov, Jan 65. I will correct it consistently.EB.] was on the Golan, to replace the telephone bug we'd installed on my first operation four years earlier. We hadn't been back there since. The batteries, of course, had long since stopped working. But only the narcolepsy of Syrian sentries had allowed us to succeed this first time around. There was an understandable nervousness about trying to operate so close to a Syrian base, especially since we now had devices installed in other parts of the heights. It didn't seem worth the risk.

Now, however, the technology unit had produced a smaller device, with lower energy consumption. It would have to be serviced only once a year. And rather than following our original plan, we'd be taking a longer, but safer, route around the slopes of Mount Hermon. Eli Yadgarov, Dovik's new deputy, just came from Sayeret Tzanhanim~~Dovik~~ led the operation. [EB. Ned, in this operation we bypassed the villages and military bases quite high but yet WELL UNDER THE SNOW LINE. My advice on the use of snow equipment and snoe practices where in late 68' under Yairy when I came back from Univ. and we

already had the Hermon (excwpt the very summit) in OUR hands.I'll correct.EB.So, the whole following paragraph should be moved three years forward.]One reason he'd called on me to join, beyond my experience of the place where we were going to replace the bug, was that I was the only officer with experience of working in (snow-covered mountain terrain: from the Pyrenees, while I'd been in Mont Louis. I arranged, under a suitably civilian guise, to order winter gear for us from a sports equipment shop in the French Alps. We set off from the same general area as my original mission, but headed north, towards the Crusader castle of Namrud, and passed UNDER it, at some 2,0500 feet up the southern slopes of Hermon, then arced around and approached the Banias road from behind). The operation went perfectly. Skirting well over and around the edges of the villages along the way, we didn't encounter a single soul. But it was hugely demanding, physically, especially for me. I was still in good shape. I'd only just turned 235. But I had now spent some 618 months on much lower level of away from sayeret training. I could feel the difference in every joint and bone.]]. EB, to be replaced to my Math prep. For Technion}

At first, I didn't mind the reserve duty. In truth, I liked the idea of being included in key operations. I had not left for the university because I was tired of Sayeret Matkal. I still felt fulfilled, energized, by the challenges we faced, and by the latitude we were given in finding a way to overcome them. And not that far different from growing up on the kibbutz, there was a sense of being part of a family. Yet my regular absences made it impossible to lead a normal life as a student.

There were undeniable upsides. Even though no one in Israel was supposed to know the sayeret existed, by virtue of the fact that Israel is a highly familial society and the country relied on a citizen army, that certain part of the secret was out. Almost no one knew what we actually did. But there was a vague sense that it was mysterious and important in equal measure, and old myths like the Gaza cinema initiation refused to die. Combined with the fact that I was ~~at least a couple~~ some three~~of~~ years older than most of my fellow students, this did give me a certain cachet, especially with my female classmates. I rarely dated. I was still carrying a torch for young Nili. Besides, during my periods on campus, I was usually busy studying. But when I would return from one of my protracted sayeret disappearances, they would

generously go through with me what I'd missed academically, especially Tehila Sadeh, (who became later, one of my favourite aides in the GHQ of the IDF, She climbed from Captain to Full Colonel) and share their class notes so I'd be able to catch up.

That was no easy task. In recent years, I've seen comments by friends from my Hebrew University years saying that I was one of truly outstanding students in our class. They were generous remarks. They were also untrue/innacuurate. It would be fairer to say that I was a *good(+),* student – especially during my final academic year, from the fall of 1967 through the summer of 1968, when I was away for only a few weeks. And that I did well enough to get my degree, and position myself to be able to apply for the top masters and PhD programs once I'd finished.

* * *

My second sayeret mission of early 1967 was more pressing, and more complex, than the 1st one.{trek around the slopes of Mount Hermon. EB> which was in Jan.65. BEFORE University] It took me back to the Sinai Desert. Extraordinarily, for a young reserve captain supposedly

done with the army, it also brought me back into contact with Chief-of-Staff Rabin.

The planning had begun in the fall of 1966, when it became clear that the Egyptians were digging a trench for a new communications cable – only a dozen feet or so from the one I'd tapped into a couple of years earlier. That bug was still working perfectly, as was the device on the second cable I'd helped to install a year later. But with the trench-diggers getting nearer to the place where we'd put the first unit, we were concerned that the workers might stumble onto what we'd done. It was decided we would mount a double operation: to replace the batteries on the second intercept, and remove the first one.

At first, we planned to do it in January 1967, by which time I'd already spent a couple of months getting ready for the mission. But we weren't ready by then, so we chose the eighth day of the lunar cycle in February, knowing that if we missed that target date, we might have to abandon the plan altogether. By March, the nights would be too short for us to risk it. My job was to dismantle the explosive device on the unit we'd buried near Jabal Libni, with the help of a long flexible metal tool specially crafted by the technological unit to disarm the booby-trap.. I spent weeks training on a mock-up in

the hangar.(in Sirkin), and was pretty confident that I'd manage it. ~~The fall-back, if I failed, was to find a way to blow the thing up – without getting myself blown up with it.~~

It was when Rabin heard that there is a plan to dismantle at night, during operation the Booby trap attached to the 'equipment' he turned worried and order a special meeting to include the person who is going to do it and bring him together with Rafael scientists who built it and a replica of the booby trap itself so that he could understand the technicalities and the risks involved. It was typical Rabin. And I respected this attitude.~~of Plan B that he summoned me to see him.~~ Yitzhak liked ~~the *idea* of~~ technology, even gadgets, but was never an expert of it. But along many years in service he turned skeptical and believed in Murphy Law, not just in regard to technology, in regard to operational aspects as well: "If something can get wrong- it will. And at the worst possible moment". It was his genuine care for people he sends into harms way, which led him to this deep skepticism. ~~But in all the years that I knew him, he never seemed entirely comfortable with the idea it would actually work.~~ I went to his office along with Dovik and – Dr. Eliezer Gonn, a laeding genius on mechanical

engineering in Rafael (National Authority for Defence R&D)~~a couple of the scientists from the tech unit~~.Rabin and half a dozen senior officers were already there. Dr. Gonn ,~~We~~ brought along the 2nd copy of the device,(which is always built and kept in such cases, exactly for the reasons we were facing now.~~a mock-up~~ Dr. Gonn took the device, which looked like a skeleton of 22" suitcase, that you can this days take with you onboard a plane, and ~~of the device, which we~~ placed it on Rabin's ~~on his~~ office table. "show me!"~~"Show me,"~~ Rabin said, pointing at the model. I took out the tool and, step by step, talked him through how I was going to defuse it. He looked fascinated. And worried. He turned to Dr. Gonn ,whom he knew well, and asked him to explain how it works. Dr. Gonn removed certain covers so the inside mechanics and electronics could be better seen.It was really impressively complicated device with both electronic elements and many moving parts: shafts, valves ,springs etc. , all made of precisely shaped, brushed matt stainless still- and start to explain. When he was almost done Rabin interrupted him and asked:

"Could it blow up spontaneously," he asked Dr. Gonn~~the lead designer.~~

"Yes, ~~I suppose~~ it could," the answer came~~he said~~.

Rabin looked physically jolted.

“What?” he barked.

Dr. Gonn ~~The scientist~~ explained his answer ~~it~~, matter-of-factly. ‘It was a physical device and obey laws of physics’~~simple physics~~, he said. ‘When~~If~~, for instance, there is a thunder storm in Turkey,~~was~~ a sudden flash of lighting in Turkey, can possibly discharge energy at exactly the frequency, directly or at one of its higher harmonies, which resonates with the frequency needed to activate the electric fuse at the detonator, and with enough energy to do it”. I was very much junior to Dr. Gonn, but being a student of physics, I was probably the only other person in the room who could fully follow the argument he raised. ~~it was conceivable that the frequency might resonate perfectly with the explosive device. If it did, yes, it was conceivable that it could go off. “It’s just physics,” he said, in what he meant to be reassurance.~~Lookinng at the faces of Rabin and others in the room ~~But~~ it was clear to me that Rabin wasn’t buying it. In fact, it was pretty clear he was about to cancel the operation. He suddenly, didn’t even look particularly comfortable with having th~~is~~ 2bd copy~~prototype~~ on his table. I felt it couldn’t end this way. I looked around for a solution. Suddenly I noticed on the office table,

besides the device few bottles of light drink which were served for the participants(we used to call oranjada, made of gaseous water with some citrus flavor). One of them was still closed/locked. Tight cork(?) on it.

"Excuse me, sir! ~~Chief-of-Staff~~," I ventured to Rabin. "With your permission, could I ask Dr. Gonn~~the scientist~~ another question?"

He nodded. I pointed at a ~~half-empty~~closed full bottle of orang~~ae so~~da that Rabin had on his desk. "Tell me," I asked, "is it possible that the fluid contents of that closed bottle are spontaneously leaking through its~~the~~ glass walls all the time ~~of this office~~ even as I'm~~we're~~ speaking to you now?~~?~~"

"Yes," the answer came, "absolutely!"~~scientist said~~.

"What?" Rabin asked.

Dr. Gonn explained calmly '~~He said~~It happens. Well, slowly of course. I ~~i~~t might take years before even a fraction of a~~n~~ mililiter~~ounce~~ of~~r~~ Oran~~gg~~a~~e so~~da went missing. But it happens. Glass is like a "frozen" liquid and liquid water or molecules are sneaking into the neighboring , much more viscous "liquid", the glass.~~was possible~~. "It's just physics."

Rabin gradually start to smile, in apparent relief as this argument developed. He had clearly had enough of

this. But he got mythe message. We all learnt a lesson about the difference between scientific truths and practical life ones. “ The operation confirmed. Good luck,” he said to Myself and Dr. Gonn as weme as we left.For years afterwards, wherever we had to relate to something, which was physically conceivable but practically irrelevant to the context, the term we used was ‘Barak BeTurkiya” means’ A lightning in Turkey’. (Yes, Barak. In Hebrew means both lightning and Brilliance).

RabinWhen the meeting was over, however, he asked Dovik to stay behind for a minute. I later discovered that he’d directedtold him to make sure that a contingency plan was in place in case the unit did explode while I was trying to defuse it. Quite logical, I should admit. Dovik did. He did not tell me about this conversation. But– he briefed the Commander of the operation to make sure they will watch it from a safe distant and, in a case of explosion to act immediately to separate the two working sites trying to complete the other ,calm the teams,take whatever remained from my body and head to the evacuation ground.indeed tell the others, not that they needed to be told, to stand well back when I began working on the device.

~~Once we got there, I told them that myself. I was especially careful to make sure that the commander of the other part of the operation, to replace the batteries on the second cable unit, was a good 100 yards away~~. Again, however, I doubt he needed to be told. Nechemia Cohen would have known, instinctively, what to do. He joined the sayeret not long after I did. About a year younger than me, he was from an impressive, modest means family in Jerusalem which put an emphasize on high education for all their children..Under Dovik's directives, when it became clear I will go next year to University, I personally mentored Nehemia to turn into the leader of our core Intelligence activities, a role I had until than at Dovik"s team. ~~We'd both been trained in Yechiel Amsalem's team.~~ We'd both been at the heart of the unit's early operational missions. We had grown up along with the sayeret itself, and we'd become close friends.

The device did not explode. But I couldn't defuse it either. The operational tool I had (rather the demonstration one I've used at Rabins table was ~~As a precaution, the tech unit had given me~~ a 125-feet-long metal extender with flexible syill cable –like inner core, allowing me to operate thefar end of the –tool remotely. I got it attached to the proper bolt mechanism,on the booby

trap but it wouldn't budge. With the clock ticking, I waved Nechemia and the others even further back. I dispensed with the extender and tried to unlock the mechanism directly. I knew exactly how it works. I connected the attachment element/bolt to the booby trap sat over the explosives, which were covered by some two feet of ground and used to forcefully turn it using the 14" lever I had ,to unscrew it out. Still, there was no give at all. Examining it as closely as I could, I did, at least, identify the problem. The swathes of epoxy we'd daubed on to the unit in 1964 had by now seeped into every crevice, and hardened into an impenetrable/ unnbreakable shell. ~~I thought about Plan B:~~ [EB> Ned There was no Plan B to explode it DELIBERATELY, that night, find where it was mentioned first, and delete it. EB]~~blowing up the whole thing. But even that, assuming it could be done without killing me, required moving a trip assembly. It, too, was locked solid~~.

I felt not just frustrated. I knew we were right to be concerned that the Egyptians, so far unaware(I have to check?) that we were able to hear every word of their Sinai communications, would discover the first intercept. The normally taciturn(?) Dovik was, if anything, more exercised about this than I was when we got back to base.

This was one of our last major operations under his two-year stint as commander. He would soon be handing over the reins to a veteran officer from the parachutists' sayeret, Uzi Yairi.

But ironically, the only thing that saved our eavesdropping network from discovery was the very thing I'd been so confident would *not* happen when I'd left for university: another full-scale war.

There were signs of growing tension throughout the spring of 1967, but at first chiefly along the northern border with Syria. Troops on the Golan Heights were firing on Israeli tractors in the demilitarized zone hundreds of feet below. Israel fired back and, after a further incident at the start of April, launched an air strike against the Syrian gunners. When the Syrians began shelling Israeli settlements in the Galilee, we against scrambled our jets, this time leading to an air battle, in which six Syrian MiG 21s were shot down.

So tensions, to put it mildly, were running high. But the first real sign we had that they might lead to war came only after I returned to Hebrew University for the start of our spring trimester. Even by my irregular standards of attendance, it would prove to be the shortest term I – and many other students – spent there.

Within days, the focus shifted to the south. On May 15 67’. The info reached Eshkol (PM) while sitting, together with the whole leadership in front of Independence day parade.~~In mid-May,~~ President Nasser moved thousands of his troops towards the border with Israel. He then expelled UNEF, the United Nations force put in place after the 1956 war. On May 23, he closed the Straits of Tiran – Israel’s trading gateway to the Red Sea, and the source of virtually all our oil imports.which came from….Iran.

I was called to ThE Unit, the morning after. May 16, one of the first large group of reservists, around 80,000 in all, who were called up in the days after Nasser’s Sinai redeployment. No one said openly that we were preparing for war. They didn’t have to. Within hours of my getting back to Kav Chamesh, Uzi Yairi, now commander of the unit in Dovik’s place, organized all of us into four teams – one of them under my command – to be ready to helicopter into Sinai and beyond the Canal in Egypt,destroy fighte planes and disable 4 Egyptian air bases there. My team was given, for obvious resons of early acquaintance, the base near Jabal Libni, since I now knee the area well.~~w the area almost as well as I did the Negev.~~

We immediately got busy with intensive training. We were equipped with an impromptu, and fairly primitive, ground version of our air force's newly developed runway-busting missiles. These small rockets were, in fact, very similar to the~~exactly the same~~ ones designed to be dropped by warplanes. But we mounted them on special tripods, with a time-delay system, allowing us to fire them directly into the tarmac from some one and a half feet vertical distance over the tarmac, when, or if, a war broke out.

[EB> Ned till p. 29 need some modifications of mine.EB]By the end of May, it was increasingly looking like *when*. And there was no real confidence that we would win without a real and costly struggle. During the 1948 war, aerial bombardment had killed about 170 people in Tel Aviv. Now, ~~word got out that~~ an area had been set aside in Gan Meir, a park in the center of the city, to allow for the burial of as many as 5,000. Even from idle chatter on the base, it was no secret that our senior military commanders were pressing the Prime Minister to take the initiative. Ben-Gurion was no longer Prime Minister. He had retired to the Negev kibbutz of Sde Boker, succeeded by the impressively wise~~bright~~, but less charismatic, Levi Eshkol.

Rabin, himself, was apparently torn. He shared his senior officers' view that a further(?) reserve call-up was needed. But he also harbored private doubts about whether the escalated retaliation against Syria, and his own aggressively worded warnings to the government in Damascus, might actually end up *causing* a war. In that way, he was very much like me: intensely self-critical, questioning, very tough at times on himself. He was also under huge pressure. When you're Chief of Staff, as I would later discover, the job itself carried a constant awareness that on Israel's security, the buck truly stopped with you. But the onus could be lightened somewhat if you were working alongside a Minister of Defense who had experience and expertise in military matters. Eshkol, like Ben-Gurion before him, was both Prime Minister and Defense Minister. Ben-Gurion was no soldier himself, but he did have an enormous interest in, and deep intuitions on strategic(command of, military) matters. Not so, Eshkol, as he himself recognized. So Rabin, on the knife-edge between going to war or not, was alone. As he increasingly agonized over every one of his own actions, he even went down to Sde Boker, hoping for reassurance from Ben-Gurion, only to be told by the now 80-year-old father of the state that he was *right* to blame

himself, and that Israel had no business going to war without, as in 1956, the(?) support of outside allies.

At the end of the May 1967, Eshkol went on national radio with the aim of reassuring the country that everything was under control. But due to a couple of last-minute changes in his text, scrawled in by a top aide, he faltered while reading it. He sounded anything but under control. Within days, he bowed to political pressure and brought (back)(?) Moshe Dayan as Defense Minister.

The three ~~two~~ weeks of uncertainty and doubt leading up to that point became known, in Israel, as the “waiting period”. I was not privy to the top-level tensions at the time, but from my perspective, then and even more so now, I think the country owes a huge debt to Eshkol. He was an eminently practical man. And one reason for his hesitation to rush into war was obvious: in a country whose defense relied so heavily on reservists, the more time available for reserve units to report, to refamiliarize themselves with their equipment and their fellow soldiers, the better. The waiting period proved, in this sense, invaluable.

What I most vividly remember, however, was a visitor to the sayeret a day or so after Ehhkol’s address.

Colonel Eli Zeira had fought in the 1948 war. He had been chief aide to Dayan when he was Chief of Staff in the 1950s. Now, he was head of the “collection department” of the intelligence corps, the equivalent of America’s National Security Agency. We knew him well: formally, the sayeret was part of his department. He called all the officers in the unit together: twenty~~-five~~ of us in all, about half, like myself and Ya’acov Tubul, called back from the reserves. We met in our contraband clubhouse in Kav Chamesh. We were all veterans of a sayeret that had never been short on self-confidence. But even we could hardly remain immune to the sense of nervousness around us. Eli Zeira, however, appeared utterly serene. Sounding almost like one of my university professors, he began his remarks by going back into history. He said that there had so far been three periods in the “Zionist project.” The first was from the first Zionist Settlements, 1884’ (its philosophical beginnings in Europe) until the establishment of Israel in 1948. The second, from 1948 until the 1956 Sinai War. The third, from 1956 until the present. Then, not even pausing, he said: “ Few days ago, a fourth period/chapter had started/opened. There will be a war. Three Arab countries will take part. Within a

week, we will defeat all of them. And a new chapter in the history of Zionism will begin.”][Till here.EB]

* * *

For me, the war began a few minutes before eight in the morning on June 5, 1967. (There were no sirens~~I can remember the time exactly, because it was right after the civil-defense sirens began blaring all over Israel~~), at 7:45. With Uzi Yairi in the passenger seat, I immediately took an liht ocre~~olive-green~~ army pick-up~~truck~~ to collect the first batch of the live runway-busting rockets.~~missiles~~, so we could get ready to set off at nightfall, by helicopter, for the Sinai. With Sayeret Matkal’s string of operational successes, we had expanded our little corner. (of Sirkin). We’d appropriated the two domed hangars a couple of hundred yards from our original base, which was where our munitions were now stored. I parked in front of the first hangar. Uzi and I arranged three of the rocket assemblies on the storage platform at the rear of the pick-up~~truck~~, just behind the cab, and I turned back to the base.

It was then that we nearly became the first casualties of the war.

The rockets had a tangle of wires connected to the time-delay mechanism, and when I hit a bump on the road, the tail-fin of one of them apparently spliced and short-circuited the electronics on the other two. All I can remember is hearing a huge explosion as they went off. The missiles somehow missed Uzi and me, but they shot through the back of the cab, sheared off the side panelling of the truck and crashed into the road about 100 yards in front of us. I can only imagine that it was the shallowness of the angle that kept them from exploding when they hit. And it was only the fact that we knew a war was starting that kept Uzi and me from doing anything more than shudder, exhale, utter a few Hebrew cursewords, and go back to collect the rest of the missiles.

Within another hour, however, it was all academic.

In a series of relentless air strikes, involving nearly all of our 2200 fighter jets, the air force eliminated Egypt's air capability, by noon the Jordanian and Syrian air forces were destroyed. All in all 450 ~~destroying hundreds of~~ aircraft on the ground. The Israeli jets also dropped their runway-busting bombs on the Sinai airfields, with just one exception (~~:~~ ? to check) Abu Suweir, west of the Suez Canal ~~the base at El Arish, on~~

~~the Mediterranean 15 miles or so north of Jabel Libni. Uzi's team was supposed to have dealt with El Arish. But in view of our early successes, Dayan and the air force commanders decided to leave the base there operational, in case our planes ended up wanting to use it themselves as our ground forces began to drive into the Sinai.~~

As the ground advance began, there seemed a real chance ~~every likelihood~~ that Sayeret Matkal would be peripheral,So Uzi tried to get missions. It was not easy [EB.Reasons

It ended up The Unit was called now to prepare an heli borne and airborne attack on Sharm el Sheikh. First the Airbase than the Town. Here as well, developments on the ground were so fast ,they rendered it unneccesary. The Unit were flown to Sharm , just to find that by landidg time the battle was already over. ~~even irrelevant, to what was becoming the most serious and potentially far-reaching military conflict between us and the Arab states since 1948. As a special-forces *intelligence* unit, the first of its kind in Israel and one of only a handful anywhere in the world, we had exceeded even Avraham Arnan's own expectations. But as a *military* unit, with the exception of a cross-border raid or two in support of the parachutists, we had so far done nothing. Now, we faced~~

~~the very real prospect of having no significant role, of being able to do nothing to help, as the conflict unfolded.~~

For almost everyone in the unit, that was essentially the story of the Six-Day War, as it very soon became known, following precisely the script that Eli Zeira had confidently outlined on his visit to Kav Chamesh days before it began. Eli, in fact, had overestimated how long it would take. He had said a week. But three Arab armies, after weeks of sabre-rattling in which their countries' leaders had vowed to defeat and destroy Israel, did take on our forces after the air force's pre-emptive strike. The fighting, especially in the south the outset, and then in Jerusalem and on the Golan Heights, was fierce. But by the time it was over, Israel had gained control of the entire Sinai up to the Suez Canal; the West Bank of Jordan; and the Golan.

My own role was at least slightly less peripheral than the rest of the sayeret. That was due to a call from Avraham, who was now in military intelligence headquarters, at about noon on the first day. He said he'd been told to get me to assemble a couple of other men from the sayeret and go, with him, into the Sinai. Our assignment was to complete my failed February

operation to dismantle or detonate the Jabal Libni intercept device. No one could assess for sure how things will develop. That justified the ~~However confident the military command was about the early progress of the war, it was clear that neither they, nor Levi Eshkol's government, were assuming our forces would remain in the Sinai for an extended length of time. Thus the continuing~~ need to get rid of our first bugging device~~, in case the returning Egyptians found it.~~

By the time Avraham got to Kav Chamesh, it was about one in the afternoon. I had drafted in two others from the unit. One was Danny Michaelson, a soldier in Nehemia's team, a friend, and physics lab partner, at Hebrew University ~~whom I'd helped to bring into the sayeret~~. He would later go on to become an internationally recognized professor of biophysics and neurology. The other was a sayeret veteran, Rafi Friedman: the trained paramedic who had saved Uri Zakai's life when he'd nearly drowned on the Golan. I got us a Jeep, and the four of us set off towards the border with Egypt. I drove. Avraham sat beside me, with Danny and Rafi in the back, along with an assortment of digging tools, and explosives to blow up the device if all else failed.

We were still a secret unit, on a secret mission. So the only formal orders we had was a scrawled *laissez-passer* in Avraham's pocket. It directed any Israeli unit we ran into to give us full, yet quiet, co-operation, and said we were cleared to link up with the headquarters of Israel Tal.

Talik, as he was known, was commander of the armored corps, and he was meant to be leading a tank division into the northern Sinai, skirting the southern tip of Gaza, going in past El Arish, and on towards the Suez Canal. I had met him before. Once. Though it couldn't really be described as a meeting. He was the commander of the Seventh Brigade when I entered boot camp, and he delivered a few formal words of welcome, in clipped tones, almost as if reciting a text from memory, to the new recruits. But Avraham did know Talik well. And Talik was now in charge of all Israel's armored units. In fact, during the three years he'd held that role, he had overhauled the way armored battalions were trained, the battlefield tactics they employed, and he had hugely raised their role and importance within the army.

We crossed into Egypt near Rafah, on the southern end of the Gaza Strip, around four o'clock on the first afternoon of the war, and followed the Israeli tank

treads west into Sinai. The only slight glitch was when I somehow contrived to take a wrong turn near the entrance to Rafah~~border~~. Before realizing my error, I ended up briefly driving deep into Raffah~~us~~ towards Gaza, which was still firmly in the hands of the Egyptians. Still, we managed to reach Talik's field headquarters well before nightfall. It was at a place called Sheik Zuweid, about one-third of the way to El Arish.

We figured we would spend the night there. The first thing Avraham did when we arrived was go see Talik, whose division consisted of two tank battalions: the old Seventh, which he had once commanded, and a reserve unit, the 60th. Avraham didn't explicitly say what we were up to. He didn't have to. Talik knew that we were from Sayeret Matkal, and he agreed we could go forward with his units and, when we got close to Jabel Libni~~El Arish~~, peel off to perform whatever our own operation was, without the risk of being fired on by our own tanks. I confess I didn't make that risk any lower by deciding to swap our old Jeep for a new one of the latest Soviet models, which the Egyptians had left behind. I did, at least, add Israeli markings to the hood as a precaution. As we drove out the next morning, I felt almost a sense of unreality. Here we were, in an Egyptian desert that I

had known only by night, on the second day of a major war. But except for the occasional isolated gunshot, we could see no sign of any fighting.

That began, slowly, to change when we got to a deserted Egyptian military camp near Bir el-Lahfan, not far from El Arish. Talik was already there. So was his successor as commander of the Seventh Brigade, Shmuel Gonen, known as Gorodish, and Colonel Menachem Aviram, who was in charge of the reserve tank Brigade 60~~battalion~~. We'd barely settled in, with Talik contemplating his next move, when we heard a burst of gunfire. And it was from fairly close, obviously very close among us from inside the former Egyptian camp we were on. As everyone looked nervously around, Avraham turned to me and said: "Ehud, don't you think we ought to deal with it?" Then, to Talik himself: "Just make sure none of your guys shoots him." I went to get Danny and Rafi. Briefed them quickly. The three of us made our way to what appeared to be some sort of bunker, some 40 yards from Taliks' halftruck, the most likely place for any remaining Egyptian soldiers to be holed up. At the entrance, I motioned to them to follow me close behind. I clicked off the safety on my Uzi, and they did the same, just in case. I figured, however, that whoever was inside would have to be either shellshocked,

or insanely brave, to want to put up a fight. There were eight men inside. As soon as I saw them, I shouted, in what was obviously at least serviceable Arabic, for them to raise their hands and lay down their weapons. They did so. It turned out ~~one of them was actually~~ a general and several of his staff officers . I made a brief attempt to interrogate them, but soon reached the limits of my linguistic proficiency, so we marched them away and handed them over to Talik's intelligence officers.

If nothing else, this interlude lent us the desert equivalent of street(?) cred with the armored commanders, and Talik agreed for us to set off the next morning with his forward-most force, Gorodish's Seventh Brigade. For the first time, we, the Guests, were encountering resistance, but nothing like what the armored units had met during the first 12 hours of the war. The Egyptians were clearly retreating by now, mounting only isolated rear-guard actions. The interception system we left in Jabel Libni was telling it to our Supreme Command, Our rapid advance had also vindicated one of the major changes Talik introduced~~made~~ to the way our armored units were trained and organized. He had focused on long range tank gunnery, on their being able to fire accurately from distances of 1,200 to 1,6~~3~~00 yards, which was outside the

range of the Egyptian anti-tank fire. Not all our units actually had tanks with sufficient range for that to work. But the Seventh Brigade did: British-made Centurions. They even had a half-battalion of the newest tank in Israel's arsenal: American Patton M48s. The reserve 60th Brigade, however, had a mix of older Sherman M51s and more vulnerable, more lightly armored, French AMX~~s~~ 13s.

As the Seventh pushed on, we drew ahead and made our way to the place where I'd planted the first Sinai intercept in 1964. For several hours, I tried to accomplish what I'd failed to manage, in the desert darkness, four months earlier. It was no easier in daylight, and I was getting increasingly frustrated. Not just at my inability to find a way to defuse the old booby-trap (T-junction), but because I felt it was a waste of time trying, while the Seventh Brigade was trundling on ahead of us. I finally told Avraham we'd be better off just blowing the thing up, and he agreed. I attached the explosives. I set a two~~five~~-minute delay, making sure we don't block the road for a long time, and we watched, from two ~~a few~~ hundred yards away, as the whole assembly disintegrated. We collected whatever fragments seemed sufficiently identifiable to risk

telling~~ anyone what had happened~~~~the Egyptians what had happened~~. Then we rejoined Gorodish.

[EB.Ned, It's a fascinating anecdote but can be squeezed to 300 rather than 500 words without losing the humor.EB]

It proved a telling ~~bizarre~~ encounter in what had so far been, at least from my ~~our~~ perspective, a learning opportunity~~slightly bizarre version of war~~. Shmuel Gonen had a reputation for courage on the battlefield, earned in 48' and later as company commander in 1956. With his recent promotion to command the Seventh Brigade, he was clearly an officer on the rise. He also had an almost theatrical sense of military bearing, not always popular with his subordinates, (and almost comically (?)out of place in the situation we now found ourselves). By the time we caught up with him, he was standing, ramrod straight, on top of ~~alongside~~ his APC, a few dozen feet from the main crossroads near Jabal Libni. He had a map in his hand, which he was studying intently, when a Jeep drew up with the commanding officer ~~who was in charge~~ of the Seventh Brigade's own sayeret, established in 60', just as I was leaving for Sayeret Matkal. He was named Ori Or. I knew him, and liked him. He was two years older than

me, (but he had grown) grew up in Kfar Chayim, on the sounorthern edge of Mishmar Hasharon. I'd gone to the regional high school with his younger sister. Gorodish nodded at Ori, then went back to studying the map. It was not a military map, but a JNF map, more like a schoolboy version, colourful, but with almost no detail. On 1: 250k, an inch is 4 miles.schoolboy version, with almost no detail. So successful improvised was our rapid advance into the Sinai that in 48 hours, we'd outstripped the original planning (for the ground portion of the war,) which was designed merely to take hold of three key points fairly close to the Israel border: El Arish, Bir Lahfan and Jabal Libni. We'd gone off the edge of our military maps as well. Now, however, Talik was loath to lose his initial momentum, possibly allowing the Egyptians to regroup, so he had ordered his units further west, toward the key Sinai airbase of Bir Gafvgafa, first taking the smaller outpost of Bir al-Hama, which was about 10 miles to the west from where we were.

Gorodish kept staring at the map. He turned it one way, then the other.(He knew we needed to move toward Bir al-Hama. But from the map, evidently,) he had no idea were to look for Bir Hama ***outside*** the map(how to get there). Just as clearly, he was too proud to ask for help. It

was, in fact, pretty simple. There were four (only two) roads. One of them, which we'd just come down, went from El Arish in the north into the southern Sinai. The other went from east to west, from the Israeli border –toward the Suez Canal. All we had to do now was turn right: head west. Finally, with appropriate fanfare, Gorodish turned to Ori and proclaimed: "Lead us to Bir al-Hama!" Unsure of which way to point, however, he simply raised his whole arm ~~finger~~ skyward. I looked at Ori. He looked at me briefly with a shade of (was arching his eyebrows, though obviously not daring to) a smile, as if to say: that's life. That's the army. All the matters is that *we* know where we're going, and what to do!.

Ori's team had taken Bir al-Hama before we and the main armored units got there, at noon time ~~few hours before sundown~~ on the third~~second~~ day of the war. The plan now was for the Seventh Brigade to pause and regroup, while the reservists of the 60th Brigade, who had not been involved in the intense first hours of fighting, drove on towards Bir Gavgafa. Talik would have known that, under normal battle conditions, that might pose a risk. If they ran into any real resistance, they'd be at a disadvantage with their shorter-range Shermans, as opposed to the Centurions of Gordodish's battalions. But the assumption,

given what had happened so far, was that the Egyptian forces were falling away. Avraham, in the flush of our modest success in escorting the Egyptians out of the bunker back in Bir el-Lahfan, had secured Talik's permission for us to keep going with the reservists of the 60th Brigade. So we did so, joining the first Israelis to advance toward Bir Gavgafa and the canal.

This would turn out to be my first real experience of battle: of how different the advance of an armored force, even one with superior weaponry, can look on the ground than on paper. And the way in which ostensibly small, obviously wrong-(?)headed, errors of judgement can sometimes carry a heavy human cost.

We had been back on the road for only a further few miles when we reached a point where wind-whipped dunes on either side of the road meant that we had to slow our pace. As we maneuvered through, there was a burst of heavy machine-guns ~~small-arms~~ and mortar fire. Then, a couple of louder, deeper explosions from what was probably an SU-100, a Soviet-made anti-tank gun. Our Shermans began to spread abreadth on two sides of the asphalt paved road, moving into position to respond, but even before they could fire back, the gun turret of one of the~~the lead~~ tanks was hit. Its camouflage netting, stored in a basket

behind the turret, caught on fire. Our Jeep was some ~~at most~~ 50 yards behind the tank, but I did not feel ~~don't think any of us felt~~ any sense of immediate danger. It was like watching a film scene in slow motion. It was obvious we were not under fire from an organized sizable Egyptian army unit, but rather a small rear gurd group of determined, and no doubt brave, soldiers firing whatever weapons they had. And yet the advance of an entire Israeli armored brigade ~~battalion~~ had been halted in its tracks.

For many ~~almost all~~ of these reservists, it was their first experience of battle too. I remember thinking afterwards that Prime Minister Eshkol, for all the political heat he had taken, had almost certainly saved Israeli lives by giving our reserve units at least a couple of extra weeks to get ready. The fire on the lead tank was smoldering. The crew, surprisingly slowly, climbed down~~jumped~~ from the Sherman, ~~out~~ their civilian luggages at hand, as if they're leaving a vacation site in a holiday~~and abandoned it~~. A crew from another tank tried, without visible success, to put out the blaze with a fire-extinguisher, and little by little, it grew higher. The next thing I saw was the deputy-commander of the brigade, Gideon Altschuller, a colorful, well known

reserve officer leaping out of his APC and running from tank to tank, urging reluctant crews~~them~~, at times physically, to get into firing positions and respond to the Egyptian shelling, which was continuing sporadically. The Sherman's M-50 main gun did not have better firing range than the SU-100, so when you climbed to firing position, even if you shoot well, you might ending up being hit, exploding. One of the shells hit a few dozen yards from our column, and I saw Gideon~~the officer~~ wince in pain. A piece of shrapnel had hit him in the buttock. A couple of guys from a nearby APC carried him away for treatment. By this time, at least, he had managed to get at least half of our tanks to start firing~~.~~ A few minutes later, the brigade commander ordered one of his half-track units to take a wide flanking maneuver~~arc~~ around to the right of the Egyptians and hit them with mortar and machine gun fire from their flank. That, and eventually, our tank fire, did the trick. The incoming shells and machine-gun ~~small-arms~~ fire ceased and, presumably, the ~~dozen~~20 or so Egyptians beat a retreat. Still, it had been something like two hours since the first exchange, before we were able to get moving again.

By then, we'd been joined by the half-battalion of Patton M48s from the Seventh Brigade, who were ordered to

lead us on to Bir Gavgafa. Though the speedier Pattons got orders to pull ahead of us and secure the base, we were all there by a couple of hours before sunset on the third day of the war. Still, the aim was not to let the momentum of the advance(?) flag. So with the Pattons turning south towards the~~holding~~ the airbase, one of the battalions from the reserve 60th kept going, as night drew nearer, on the road west toward the canal. It was a more mobile force than the Shermans. Also, potentially a lot more vulnerable: a mix of the lightly armored French AMX 13s and half-tracks. A few of the light tanks led the way, then a long line of armored personnel carriers, with a few more tanks at the rear. I nosed our Jeep roughly into the middle, a couple of vehicles behind the battalion commander, a lietenant-colonel named Ze’ev Eitan. As we drove, there were little groups of Egyptian soldiers on either side of the road, and a scattering of tanks and other vehicles either hit by our air strikes or abandoned. Some of the Egyptian soldiers aimed an occasional burst~~round~~ of automatic rifle fire in our direction, but there seemed little point in shooting back. We didn’t need to fight. It was clear that they didn’t really want to.

After sunset, shortly before it turned darkAs the sun began to set, Eitan ordered the column to halt. He got out of his APC and, a bit like Gorodish but with none of the theatrics, began studying his all-but-useless map. The road we were on cut through an almost sea-like series of dunes on either side, some of them pretty high. He made a brief attempt toIt wasn't easy to figure out from the map where exactly we were (JNF maps), but gave up, figuring that as long as we kept heading west, we were going in the direction of the canal. He ordered a night encampment.

All that remained was to organize our night encampment.Usually the rule is to arrange a square or rectangle of vehicles, symmetrically on both sides of the road. Each company got a sector, probably with a tank platoon on each of four sides. And make a series of guards, several on each side to be on alert, in case something develops. There were still, we had to assume, pockets of Egyptian soldiers around, though I doubt any of us expected trouble. Still, there were established rules in setting up a properly defendable position for the night. And beyond that, there was simple common sense. As Eitan briefed his officers on how to organize things for the night staying, I stood a few feet off to the side, avidly interested in absorbing the kind of

real-world detail we could never get~~ in officers' school~~ anywhere else. As he ran through ~~the drill~~details, the commander of the AMX company interrupted. "Sir," he said, "why are we staying *here* – right on the road? As you've said, there are Egyptians still out there behind is for sure, and ahead of us any force which might come will inevitably roll on us.~~,~~ If any of them decide to fight, this is not the greatest place for us to be. Why not a few hundred yards away from the road, on a flat stretch of the sand, which at least gives us a view of any movement? Or allow us to Ambush a coming force?." The officer's name was Amnon Marathon. A few years later, by then as a brigade commander, he'd actually be under my command. And I could see that he was right. In fact, I expected Eitan to say: "Yeah, let's do it." But he didn't, even when Amnon kept pressing. My sense was that Eitan, too, agreed, but that having just 20 minutes ago ordered a night encampment,~~ halted the column,~~ he was reluctant to get the tanks and APCs moving again. It was dark. Everyone was tired. Some of the crews seemed already to have gone to sleep. "We'll stay where we are," he said.

I pulled our Jeep a few yards off the road. We organized a series of watches: first Avraham, then Rafi

and Danny, with me taking the last pre-dawn stretch. But less than two hours later, I felt Rafi nudge me awake. “I see head lights aura of some vehicle/s coming ~~hear something~~,” he said. “From the rear of the column.”

I told him to go to report it to the ‘command post’ at Eitan’s half track. Within f~~ew~~~~ive~~ minutes, he was back. “They said its probably Egyptian soldiers fleeing the battlefield, they asked whether we ‘sayeret guys’ can deal with it,” he said. I woke up Danny. The three of us got into the Jeep, stopping to tell whoever was on watch in the unit looking backwards ~~each of the other units~~ to hold fire until we were back and join us only if fire is opened. No sooner had we pulled clear, than we saw two Egyptian tracked modern APCs, headlights on, driving towards us. We signalled for them to stop and, once they did, to raise their hands, which they showed no hesitation in doing. There were a dozen soldiers in all. We led them back to the rear of the column, and turned them over to a couple of ~~intelligence~~ officers.

“I heard something else, too,” Rafi told me as I was getting ready to go back to sleep. “I think I heard low roaring sound~~voice~~s, from the ~~an~~other direction, he pointed to~~toward~~ the canal. I’m not *sure*. It was faint. But I think so.”

I told him to keep listening. And I was worried. After all, ~~This, after all, was what we *did* in Sayeret Matkal. Operating at night, concerned above all else to make sure we escaped detection.~~ wWe learned – we *trained* – to observe, to notice, to listen. If Rafi had thought he heard something, I figured, the chances were that he had.

It was Danny who woke me up next. It was his turn as watchman, and he said he was sure he had heard sounds from off to the west. Not sound~~voice~~s now, but a faint tremor that sounded to him like tank or APCs tracks ~~on sand~~. I put my ear to the ground. Danny did the same. I, too, could hear that sound ~~sensed some kind of movement~~. Danny said he thinks it got somewhat stronger. I told him to go to the Eitan's half track and ~~Eitan,~~ to insist he be woken up, and tell him what we'd heard. And if they didn't want to wake him, to tell them we were from a unit trained to do this, and genuinely ~~were~~ believe~~pretty sure~~ we'd heard a mechanized unit heading towards us~~something~~. When he got back, I asked him whether he'd managed to get to the commander himself. He said: "Yes, and I tol~~warne~~d him."

"And?"

"Don't know," Danny answered. "He released/relieved me and turned ~~went off~~ to talk to his ~~one of the other~~ officers."

Satisfied that the alert had got through, I tried to grab at least a bit more sleep before my own watch. But within 15 minutes, Danny jostled me awake again. "I'm *sure* now," he said. "I hear it clearly. Whatever it is,Tanks or tracked APCs it's closer."

I went off myself this time, to talk to Eitan. Before I've reached his half track, suddenly~~ut~~ the column of Egyptian t-55 tanks appeared on the road~~our right flank~~ driving with full headlights~~before I even got there~~. They were at most 52~~0~~ yards away from the front edge of our night encampment~~, having suddenly come up through a series of dunes~~. I'm sure they were every bit as surprised by the encounter as we were. But they knew what to do. They opened fire.

Had we listened to Amnon Maraton and deployed a few hundred yards back from the road, at least we'd have seen them coming as they reached the road. Even if Eitan had been right to feel~~fear~~ that organizing that was too late or complicated, he could at least have posted a~~two~~ ~~small groups of~~ tank~~s~~ platoon as advance lookout~~s~~, off the road, ahead ~~on either side~~ of the column. Even if we~~he~~'d merely

acted on our first *definite* warning, from Danny, we'd have had an extra 20 minutes to prepare ourselves for what was coming.

But that was all irrelevant now. The first of the incoming shells jolted our crews awake. Within 30 seconds ~~a minute ,~~ they were returning fire. It was an unequal battle, however. Both sides used tank rounds with tracing, so you could follow the trajectory of every single round. Our shells barely dented the Egyptians' heavily armored Soviet T55s and when hit the hull forward slope,(of the t-55,) it was just deflected vertically towards the sky. Theirs, every one was a hit and usually set on fire one of our vehicles. Luckily, there were only twoT-55s tanks at the front. The rest were reluctant to deploy into the dunes. Within ~~few minutes~~barely a minute or two they , had crippled ~~mos~~many~~t~~ of our half-tracks and a few ~~number~~ of our lighter tanks. The APCs begun exploding. A couple of the tanks were engulfed in flames. Now that we were in a fight, burning half tracks around, and beginning of explosions Lt. Col.Zeev Eitan was at his best, showing ~~did show~~ almost incredible calm and courage. Standing tall in his half track~~APC~~, surrounded by shooting and flames he gave out a steady stream of orders. He tried to call up artillery support, but we were so far ahead of the rest

of the Israeli forces in the Sinai that none of our artillery units had us within its' ~~was within~~ range. Noticing that the Egyptian tanks can not be penetrated at their front armor, h~~H~~e then order a light tank platoon ~~got three or four of our surviving tanks,~~ from the rear of the column, to get out of the road to the right side ~~peel off~~ and maneuver~~position~~ themselves to fire on the Egyptians from their flank. It worked. The first Egyptian tank was hit and start burning. Finally, he ordered the rest of the unit to collect the wounded and dead and pull back in the direction of Bir Ga~~f~~~~v~~gafa. Many had already started doing it on their own.

Even before the retreat order, Avraham – and then Danny and Rafi too – were pressing for me to go. "Ehud, we're in a *Jeep*," Avraham said. "There's nothing we can do to help." I resisted at first. ~~Though he was right,~~ I was mesmerized by the intense close distance battle. – Moreover~~of course~~, I couldn't see how we could just leave. But Avraham was right. We could not help. We could have been killed. ~~as the sun began to rise,~~ W~~w~~e joined the rest of the column in pulling back. It was on our way backwards along the paved road, at sunrise, that we crossed~~ – even~~ ~~as~~ one of Gorodish's Centurion companies rolling towards the Canal ~~arrived~~ to rescue us. We were

heavily attrited, they were fresh this morning, yet, battle seasoned from previous days. We stopped for a while besides the road to let the tanks roaring westward into the battle. We were heading beackwards when t~~T~~he battle raged on for nearly an hour, finally leaving the Egyptian tank unit defeated and very nearly destroyed. But it had come at a ssignificant ~~huge~~ price. Nearly two dozen of the reservists in Zeev Eitan's battalion were killed, dozens more wounded~~injured~~. ~~–~~I also soon heard that the commander of the Centurion company~~force~~ sent to help us – an officer named Shamai Kaplt~~t~~an, who was married to my~~a~~ childhood 'sister'~~friend of mine~~ from 'Dror' group in Mishmar Hasharon – fell dead, on the leading tank turret of his company~~had lost his life~~.

* * *

We were back at Bir Gaf~~v~~gafa junction when we heard that, after fierce fighting with the Jordanians, Israeli troops had taken control of the whole of east Jerusalem, fighting their way into the Old City and regaining the Western Wall. It was an emotional moment. Also, a kind of reminder, after the senseless human losses I'd just witnessed, of what a decisive victory in this war might

mean. Even for me – a kibbutznik, without a religious upbringing – it was impossible not to feel a special, almost physical elation,

[EB. (?) the bond with Jerusalem, nurtured through the bible and history reading, by the symbols of statehood and by the respect for the latent religious-like foundations of Zionism, was part of us all.[again, yours is better,Ned. You can erase mine.EB(?)]~~m.~~ I had grown up with stories of Jewish life and Jewish rites in the time of the temple. I may not have read the Torah in the same way as a religiously observant Jew. It was not, for me, an instructionon~~on~~--guide to everyday life, or a literal account of history. But it *was* part of my people's history, indispensable to understanding who I was, where I'd come from, and how I'd ended up the person I was, in the place that was my home. For all Israelis, it was part of our DNA. That was also true for many of the hills and valleys, villages and settlements, of ancient Judea and Samaria: the West Bank of the Jordan River.

As I set off with Avraham and the others back to Tel Aviv on the morning of the fourth day of the war, we heard that Israeli forces were consolidating their presence~~hold~~ in the North~~there~~, too. There were long lines of cars, and military vehicles, clogging the road north.

But in the Jeep, I could weave around the worst of the bottlenecks, taking sideroads, or even veering off into the edge of fruit groves. After dropping Avraham back at the *kirya* in Tel Aviv, I got to Sirkin with Danny and Rafi by around noon.

The major fighting now was in the north, as our forces were about to take the battle tod the Syrians on the Golan Heights. The Base of The Unit [EB. we didn't call it Kav Hamesh anymore EB.] ~~Kav Chamesh~~ was nearly empty. Most of Sayeret Matkal was trying, virtually without success, to make some practical contribution to the war. From the moment of the first of our air force strikes, the frustration had been building, along with a sense that there was something not *right* about being part of an ostensibly elite unit, but finding yourselves unemployed in a full scale war. Uzi Yairi tried to make sure there ***is****will be* a role for his Unit. Efforts failed initially. Then, a plan was hectically devised, to land The Unit from the air in a major Egyptian air base some 12 miles north of Sharm el Sheikh, and leading it's conquest. Almost the whole Unit flew southward. The war went faster. When they landed Sharm el Sheikh was already taken over by the forces on the ground. (It was a formative disappointment whose correction needed years.

But, at the end, succeded).~~utterly surplus to requirements.~~

Being ***there***, inside the fighting was more than just curiosity. For me It was a ***must***.I felt all of that. I felt~~know~~ Avraham did. I suspect that was one reason he had been so keen, on day one, for us~~me~~ to get together a team for the operation at Jabal Libni, he felt it's wrong not to ~~and to~~ be a part of it as well. For me, ~~there was also a host of additional reasons I was hungry to find some way of getting involved.~~ s~~S~~ome of it went back to my childhood, in Mishmar Hasharon, when I'd felt the disconnect between the historic events of 1948 and the fact that ~~almost~~ all of them took place somewhere outside our kibbutz. I well remembered my feeling watching the Messerschmidts, it now turned more clear, If you want to have an impact, be in the cockpit, on air. Not under the tree in your Kibbutz. Now, however, I was 25 years old. Though I'd left the army to go to university, I was still very much involved with the sayeret. It had been my life for more than five years. I had the experience, and the identity, of a special forces officer. ~~Even if there was no way for me to participate in a meaningful way,~~ I felt an urge to witness what was happening on the ground. To observe. To learn. To *be there*.

And maybe because I was still young – maybe even, as when I'd leapt off the wall in Mont Louis, because there was some connection with my experience of overcoming my sandbox fears as a three-year-old – I felt no particular sense of danger. I knew that there were risks in going to where the fighting was.(?) But it wasn't Russian roulette. Rationally, if not quite so confidently as when I'd contemplated the wall of the moat or the ledge of the sandbox, I knew that most solldierspeople actually coame out of any war alive.

OThe others in the sayeret felt probably a similar pull. ~~Most had headed south.~~ A few, however, were in the north, and I now headed toward the Golan as well. At first, I hooked up with the reservist parchutists' brigade, who were preparing to be helicoptered from the Sea of Galilee shore onto the southern shelf of the heights – the same climb I'd made in commanding the Hilutz~~back-up unit~~ for Dovik Tamari in our second Golan bugging mission. But the longer I hung around, the less sure it seemed the airborne operation would happen. So I drove further north, to near where I'd crossed on the unit's very first operation, and met up with a ~~small~~ group of some 40 fellow reservists from the sayeret. It was clear our tank forces had already managed to break the front-line resistance of

the Syrians. But fighting was still going on in some parts of the Golan. In the area where we now were, the northwestern corner, bordering Lebanon, there was a series of small Alawite Syrian villages that still lay beyond the Israeli advance.

We got the order to see if we could take them. Which, in the space of an hour or two, and with no more resistance than I'd met in "capturing" the Egyptians hiding in a bunker in their the Sinai, we did.

By the time we made our way over to the the Syrians' main Golan base, in Quneitra, the war was drawing to a close. We drove up into a pair of hills above Quneitra, one of which housed a kind of Syrian officers' club, and peered down toward the southern reaches of the Golan. The sun was setting. It was utterly silent.

It was also time to head back. I'd handed over my Jeep to a couple of parachutists, and couldn't resist the idea of taking a slightly more comfortable mode of transport for the drive south: a sleek, black Mercedes, obviously belonging to one of the now-departed Syrian officers. I hot-wired the car, got in, and started home. If only because of the Syrian license plates, I realized that taking the main road back into Israel was probably not a good career move. The southern part of the Golan

was already ~~firmly~~ under Israeli control, so I found a sinuous dirt track which ran between the now abandoned Syrian military positions on the edge of the heights and then dove steeply toward the Kibbutzim's orange and banana groves on the Eastern shore of lake Galilee~~border~~.

It was late evening~~afternoon~~ now. Whether because the sky was darkening, or because Israeli police and soldiers had a lot else on their minds, no one noticed the Syrian license plates. I headed to Givataim, in the northern part of the city, onto a residential street I'd come to know well in the sayeret. It was the home of Menachem Digli – the officer who, as deputy commander to Yosef Castel, had offered me the wise words of advice before I went to officers' school. Before I got back from the course, he'd had a motorcycle accident and pretty badly damaged his leg, meaning he couldn't– follow on battle field roles,at least temporarily~~follow Castel back to the Golani Brigade~~. He had since then been in Unit 154, where Arnan and Sammi Nachmias spent many years. ~~intelligence headquarte~~.

~~rs.~~ I figured a Syrian Mercedes would make a nice present. Not wanting to wake him up, I left it in front of his house. Sadly, he never got to use it. I don't know how they found out, but the next morning a couple of

military police knocked on his door and asked what he knew about the black car parked outside. “Nothing,” he replied. “It’s not mine.” And they took it away.

Ten days later, I was back at Hebrew University, in a city, and a country, that felt completely different. The most obvious change was physical. The Israel in which I had grown up was a place which felt not just small, but pinched, especially in its narrow, nine-mile “waist” around Mishmar Hasharon. Gaza, controlled by the Egyptians from 1948 on, was all of 430 miles from the southern suburbs of Tel Aviv. The country’s entire area, about 7,200 square miles, made it about three-quarters the size of New Hampshire. That, in itself, need not have affected the way we saw ourselves. I’m sure no one grows up in New Hampshire feeling hemmed in by its geography. Yet imagine if Maine, Vermont, Massachusetts and Canada were all heavily armed, opposed to New Hampshire’s establishment as a state, and pledged to reversing that “historical error”. We lived in a tougher neighborhood.

The war hadn’t changed that, although in the days immediately after it was over, I think a lot of us believed we would now see a period in which political haggling would take the place of killing, and which would, sooner or later, lead to peace. I know that I felt

that way. And the change in mere geography – the fact that in the space of a single week, the territory Israel controlled had Moe than tripled ~~more than doubled~~ in size – gave us a sense that we could *breathe*. Wander. Explore. Most of my classmates were, like me, not religiously observant. But we all felt a sense of historical connection in walking through places on the West Bank whose names resonated from the Bible. Or from more recent history: the Arab town of Hebron, for instance, was the site of our Patriarchs tomb, and part of our history through the Miilenia. It also was where one of the oldest Jewish communities in Palestine was attacked, in 1929, Several dozens slaughtered, and then forced out in 1948. I felt especially moved when I entered the Old City of Jerusalem, walking ~~stopping and chatting and buying things at~~ the colorful market ~~t stall~~s. And, religious or not, when I stood in front of the Western Wall. No Israeli been able to visit the surviving remnant of the temple since the 1948 war. From nowhere in the western, Israeli-controlled half of Jerusalem, was it even visible.

Nor, in a real sense, had the *people* of East Jerusalem, or the West Bank, been visible. The personal interactions we had with Palestinians in the weeks after the war were, as I recall, without overt tension, much

less hostility~~. They were often friendly~~. But the encounters were superficial: a few words across a market stall or a restaurant counter. Probably, some ~~I know some of my classmates~~ felt, or dared to hope, that these small, reciprocal politeness~~es~~es were the beginning of a more normal co-existence. ~~That in the wake of the war, we Israelis and the Arabs would become true neighbors, and grow to like one another.~~ I was less starry-eyed. ~~I did very much want that true neighborliness. But~~ I also remembered 1948. I had spent five years as a soldier. For me, the first hope was that Israel, once showed its strength , will be respected, somewhat feared and we Israelis, would win simple *acceptance*. I had a sense that even that would take time. But if that happened, I believed that we and the Palestinians and Jordanians, Syrians and Egyptians, could at least begin to build a genuine, lasting, human relationship.

IN June 67 Eshkol's Govt. decided to define the results of the war, the territories we conquered , 'a deposit' for peace negotiations, to be kept until they started. It took only a matter of weeks for even that more modest hope to be dashed. At the beginning of September, an Arab summit in Hartoum, Sudan, formally adopted a platform of "three no's" – explicitly rejecting not just

peace with Israel, but negotiations, or even recognition. I suppose that had an ‘Arab logic’~~was understandable~~. In the run-up to the war, Arab states, especially Egypt and Syria, had promised not just victory, but the end of the State of Israel. In six days, they had not just been defeated military. They had been humiliated politically. Yet their rejection of any possibility of co-existence was not just delivered in words. As early as the First of July, three weeks after the war, an Egyptian commando team staged a raid(?) into the northern Sinai, and there was a series of further clashes between Egyptian and Israeli forces across the Suez Canal. In October, a pair of Egyptian missile boats attacked and sunk Israel’s Flagship of the Navy, the destroyer Eilat, killed nearly 50 ~~largest warship, the destroyer Eilat, killing nearly 50 people~~ and wounding dozens of others.

For the first time since leaving the army, I found myself contemplating whether I should have second thought about my decision to put IDF behind. (I’d made the right choice)~~e~~.– I’d obviously been wrong to assume that we were headed toward a period of “normalcy”. But that was only part of the reason for wondering whether I should have remained in uniform. However minor my own role had been, however bizarre at times, the Israel’s most

transformative conflict since the War of Independence had had a powerful effect on me. Militarily, I was struck by how the *tools* of victory had changed since 1948. Not just the huge importance of our air force, either. Perhaps because I'd actually seen them operate, I was especially fascinated by our armored units. Both in the Sinai and the Syrian Heights, now turned into Golan, it was the tanks that had broken the back of enemy resistance on the ground. And I had seen not only their power, but their vulnerability as well, during the self-induced "ambush" southwest of Bir Gafvgafa.

Moreover, though no one said a word about this publicly after the war, I knew that Sayeret Matkal had played a critical role. Once the war had begun, we had contributed a grand total of almost nothing to Israel's triumph. But on the Golan, and especially in the Sinai, a major reason for the speed of our ground forces' victory, *was* the (?) results of/related to our operations (~~sayeret~~). The main focus of discussion after the war was, understandably, on the importance of the early successes of our air force. Moshe Dayan, having taken over as Defense Minister only days before the conflict, wisely had not altered the plan for wave upon wave of pre-emptive air strikes. But he did change the location

and timing of our ground attacks. This was based on having perfectly detailed, up-to-date, information on precisely where the Egyptian and Syrian units were, and what they were doing and planning.

[EB. Ned, erase it. I don't think anything like this ever happened. If you know otherwise ,let me check it.EB.]Indeed, on the eve of Eshkol's unfortunate radio address, we knew that the Egyptians were planning to launch a pre-emptive(?) attack. We passed the information on to the Americans. President Nasser, assuming there was an Israeli spy in his ranks, called it off. (?).EB. Till here.]

As speculation now mounted about how the Israeli military seemed to know so much about Arab forces before attacking, Aharon Yariv, as head of military intelligence, decided on misdirection. He had been very much a part of the sayeret's early operational successes. Now, he feared that exposure would limit our ability to retain and expand our intercept capability in the future. Like other military leaders, he was enjoying a burst of popularity, bordering on rock-stardom, in the aftermath of the war. So in one of his speeches, he inserted a reference to a "high-ranking spy" in the Egyptian army,

who had leaked critical information to us in the run-up to the war.

The “spy” was our T-junctions.

On a personal level, too, the war left a major mark on me. It is true that, as I drove deep into the Sinai and then, a couple of days later, sped north to the Golan, I had not felt a sense of fear or danger. It is true as well that a big part of this was being able to tell myself that most people, after all, did come out of wars alive. But that was, in part, a rationalization. People *did* die. In these six days in June, people *had* died. Many thousands of Egyptians. And something like 650 Israelis too. Some of them were not just people whom I knew. They were people to whom I’d been close. They included my sayeret comrade, Nechemia Cohen. He, like I, had left the unit, not long before the war. But in his case, it was not to go study. He joined Battalion 202 of the parachutists’ brigade, as deputy company commander. The company ~~battalion~~’s commander was our old Sayeret Matkal team leader, Yechiel Amsalem. While Dayan’s approved plan for the ground war called for our forces initially to ***skirt*** the Gaza Strip and focus on the Sinai, ***without*** reaching the Suez Canal, after exchanges of fire with Palestinian fighters, Rabin,(?) as chief-of-staff,

ordered troops into the strip. Amsalem was killed early in the battle to take over Ali al Montar, the hill that control the city of Gazafighting. Nechemia took over command. Leading the way in his –half trackAPC, he continued the advance. He was shot and killed just 15 minutes later. To this day, Nechemia and I share the distinction of being the most decorated soldiers in Israel's history. I believe have no doubt that, had he lived, Nechemia would have held that honor himself.

In contemplating my own future after the war, I did, of course, think often about Nechemia. Just a couple of days after the war, before even going back to university, I drove up to Jerusalem to see Nechemia's parents, whom I'd met several times, and his older brother, Eliezer, whom I'd got the know very well. His army nickname was "Cheetah" and, as a leading commander in of our Israel's main helicopter squadron, had flown both me in training and and Nechemia on missions into the Sinai. He was at the front door when I arrived. [EB. Ned, I think we should later tell the story of the silent funeral of the Green Island fallen fighters, ours and Shayeytet 13, in Ein Harod. It will bring this message more evocatively.EB](An unspoken – and, I'm sure some psychologists would say, unhealthy – determination had taken hold in Israel, from

the very beginning of the state, to resist openly showing one's emotions at times of pain or loss. The model Israeli mother, or father or brother, were those who stood silent and strong as a soldier's coffin was lowered into the ground). It was not our usual style. Still, as Cheetah and I embraced, I could feel my(?) eyes dampen. I noticed ~~have no doubt~~ that there were tears in his eyes as well.

"Ehud," he said very quietly. "Our squadron was the one that got the call the bring out our casualties. They ordered the pilot who brought out Nechemia not to tell me he was dead. Until after the war was over."

"Nechemia~~He~~ was a wonderful man, Cheeta,~~Eli.~~ There was no one better," I said. I knew it risked sounding trite,(?) but I felt ~~am sure~~ he knew that I meant every word of it.

~~Still, I did not draw wider lessons from Nechemia's death in deciding whether I should return to the army. Yes, the terrible price that my friend had paid in Israel's victory was a reminder that any one of us could die if we chose to be soldiers. But I still did not expect it to happen to me. Maybe this was simple human nature. Maybe it was denial. And without romanticizing his loss in any way, I did know that~~ D~~d~~uring his brief

time as a command ~~soldi~~er, Nechemia had influenced events. He had made a difference. Having served ~~,~~ as his superior, then with him, and become his friend was for me an experience I held precious/a genuine blessing.~~, I had no doubt that he felt that way as well.~~

For my part, I was already been looking at life as a journey. With a known beginning and an unknown end. An odyssey. I felt it as a journey, in search of inspiring meaning. Achievements are all relative, fleeing, temporary and elusive. But in themselves they cannot be more than means for achieving a sense of fulfillment, based on ***meaning***.

I was torn between two powerful drives: on one hand, to study, to contemplate, to immerse myself in Science. Out of urging, dominating sense of curiosity and thirst for knowledge. Few things could be more stimulating than finding myself in Science. Challenging the great puzzles/secrets set for us by God.

The other drive was a drive for action, in search of the addicting, high adrenalin, sense of permanent adventure, trying unchartered territories at the service of the Project we were brought up to carry on. The Project per se, might not suffice without the gripping sense of creative and imaginative intensity, which I felt every so

often at the cutting edge of intelligence related operations. And there was in the realm of action another driving curiosity,other challenging puzzles/secrets. The ones about the infinite, fathomless complexity and uncertainty attached to human nature, strengths and weaknesses in action. Especially under crises. I was fascinated by all. I knew choices will have to be done. You cannot enjoy ***all*** worlds. I tried to answer two questions: first, which of the two possible choices, might carry more meaning to me at the end of the day. Second, on which one I will wake up in the morning more positively energized for the chores of the coming day. I couldn't answer the first. I thought I might be able to learn more on the second.

_visions crossed my mind, of where I saw myself being – or hoped to be – a decade or so in the future, when I would be in my mid-30s. The first involved going on after Hebrew University to get my masters and PhD, and carving out a career as a researcher or hopefully a professor. The second was to return to the military. There, it was more difficult to envision exactly how things would pan out in the years ahead. Yet the first stage was absolutely clear to me: to become, if possible, the commander of Sayeret Matkal.

I did not merely run over the pros and cons in my mind. I talked to others, university classmates and professors, sayeret comrades and senior officers.

Regarding the second question mentioned earlier, I felt I already have a feeling of what it means to be a special forces Unit commander, in daily life context. I did not know how a scientist life look like. This could, at least somewhat corrected. So, II ~~also~~ decided that,(~~–~~if I was going to choose a career in math and physics), I needed to get first-hand experience of what that would mean.

In the late summer of 1967, I joined a two-month summer program for selected group of physics students,~~program~~ working with scientists at Israel's premier post-graduate research facility, the Weizmann Institute. I was immersed in an intellectually inspiring environment, surrounded~~–~~ by (?watching) some of the top theoreticians and thinkers not just in Israel, but in the world. I tried to imagine myself, after graduation from Hebrew University in a year's time, and completing at least M.Sc, probably a Ph.D. working alongside them, perhaps in theoretical~~nuclear~~ physics. ~~Then, another two years for my masters. Four more to gain my PhD. And then perhaps returning to Weizmann as a post-doc.~~ It would be

hard work. Each field is so deeply different. No one can predict or guaranty success. –But if I chose that route, I felt ~~knew~~ I'd apply myself with the same intensity and conventions-defying spirit, ~~singlemindedness~~ I ~~had brought to~~put into– everything I've done in operations~~planning and executing each operation I led in the sayeret~~.

[EB. Please erase. Too hype.] While I knew there could be no guarantees, I felt confident that I'd succeed[sounds too narcissist.EB].]

]EB. Ned, sometimes after I leave it for an hour, I feel that your version is better, less pompous, and dry than mine. So leave both versions for further thought.EB.]The real question was how much of this academic life would be stimulating, fascinating, challenging – the kind of attractions I was glimpsing in my brief taste of the Weizmann Institute – as opposed to routine. Or, as some of the post-docs I talked to acknowledged, how much would involve navigating the *politics* of the academic world. In Sayeret Matkal, especially if I went on the command the unit, I knew I would be doing something that challenged me every day, sometimes every hour, in an environment where individual initiative was not just encouraged. It was essential, from top to bottom, for the sayeret to succeed.[EB. Your

version leads more naturally to the following paragraph.EB.]

Especially now, watching the daily skirmishes along the Canal and listening to the voices from the defeated Arab Capitals, that it was becoming gradually more and more clear, that the Six-Day War, despite our victory, would almost certainly not be our last, I suppose I felt that in uniform, much more than in a laboratory, I could make some real difference to my country’s future.